



# **INTEGRAL RECOVERY TWELVE STEPS**

## STEP ONE

I acknowledge that I have a problem and that because of \_\_\_\_\_  
my life has become unmanageable.

In Step One, we admit that there is a problem in our lives. Then, we identify what the problem is. It could be chemical dependency, anger control, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anything. But first, make a list of all the positive aspects of this issue. Be thorough.

What are all of the positive parts of my problem? What makes this problem good or fun to have?

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Now list the negatives of this problem. What are the bad or not fun parts of having this particular problem?

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Now look at your lists you've written. Looking at these lists, you are in a position to make some honest choices based on your findings and you can get in touch with what really matters to you. Share these lists of good and bad parts

with your guides and therapist and then with your group. Ask for feedback about these lists. When you have done that, you and your field guides make a decision as to whether you are ready to go on to Step Two.

## STEP TWO

**I take full responsibility for this problem and am willing to do the work necessary to heal.**

Taking responsibility is not about assigning blame (and there could be plenty to go around). It is about making a decision that you will do what you can to overcome the problem. “I have this issue that is making a mess out of my life and getting in the way of me realizing my full creative powers as a human being.”

Make a list of the things that you can do to take full responsibility for this issue. What can you do or change in your life to make this problem different?

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Now make a list of obstacles that might stand in the way of you doing something about this problem. What might make it hard for you to make changes?

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Share the results of the two lists with your guides and therapist. Then write a contract of commitment to take responsibility for changing this problem in your life.

*CONTRACT OF COMMITMENT*

I commit to changing this problem in my life because....

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Here are the agreements that are a part of this contract: I agree to....

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Now present your contract to your group. From the feedback you receive from your group and your field guides and therapist, you will know if you are ready to move on to Step Three.

**STEP THREE**

**I am coming to believe that there is a way out, and that the way out consists of personal wellness practices that exercise my body, mind, heart, and soul.**

Spend some time with your field guides and let them explain a Personal Wellness Plan, which consists of wellness practices. You may have already started some of the practices with your group. Consider what effect doing such a comprehensive wellness plan could have on your life and your future. Consider the differences it could make in the life of your family. Talk this over with your guides or other students, then write a page on your understanding of the Personal Wellness Plan and write ways that you might want to start using it in your life.

A Personal Wellness Plan is....

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Wellness practices that I want to use for my body are:

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Wellness practices that I want to use for my mind are:

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Wellness practices that I want to use for my heart are:

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Wellness practices that I want to use for my soul are:

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Show this work to your field guides and get feedback on it. Then, when you are ready, present it to your group. With feedback from your group and your guides' approval, you will know if you are ready for Step Four.

#### **STEP FOUR**

**I am ready to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of my past, and find the source of my pain, fear, and suffering.**





Now share with your field guides, therapist and group what it was like to work on this assignment. You do not have to share what you wrote. When you have completed this you are ready for Step Five. Be brave! Have courage! You are getting free.

## STEP FIVE

**Having found the source of this pain, I am willing to release it.**

In Step Five, you will share what you wrote in Step Four with a field guide or therapist. This will begin to help you release the dragons from the basement. Dragons are remarkable creatures: when they are kept in the basement, they are a source of endless problems and havoc. They can be sources of anxiety, depression, mood swings, rage, self-hatred, overwhelming cravings, or other emotions. But when dragons are released, they are a source of tremendous transformative energy and power. All the energy that you used to keep those critters locked in the basement is freed up for growth, creativity, and well-being. This may sound simple, but the reality is a bit more complicated and may take more work. Why? Because many dragons are very stubborn and will resist to stay in their comfortable dungeon. Fortunately, at Open Sky we have some very powerful methods for releasing dragons. Talk to your field guides and therapist about creating a ceremony or group to release your personal dragons.

What happened when you shared what you wrote for Step Four with your field guide or therapist? How was that for you?

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What ceremony, ritual or group did you use to begin to release some dragons?

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## STEP SIX

**Having identified some sources of my trauma and suffering, I am willing to do the healing work that is necessary for my continued growth and happiness.**

Step Six is absolutely essential for recovery. Unresolved past trauma can contribute to substance abuse, chemical dependency, depression, anxiety and relationship problems. Failing to deal with these traumas is one of the main causes of relapse into old problems. Moreover, trauma (those dragons again) can get us stuck where we can not continue our growth. Unresolved trauma works hand in glove with addictive substances and problems to keep us stuck in immaturity. If you begin using at age fifteen and get sober at thirty, you will likely find that you have been in a state of suspended growth. At age thirty, you will find that you have the same emotional, intellectual and spiritual self as a rather undeveloped fifteen year old (the body, however, will have gotten old fast).

Unresolved trauma causes constant inescapable stress. And in the brain of the chemically dependent, depressed or anxious, stress is public enemy number one. The use of substances and other self-destructive behaviors becomes the number one way many people cope with this stress. However, drugs and other destructive behaviors treat the symptoms of stress only temporarily, while stress will continue in the brain unabated. This stress can become the cause of the near constant cravings for more substances or destructive behaviors. Stress is your deadliest foe in recovery and if you do not deal with and release the dragons in your basement, you will be unable to attain continued sobriety and growth.

Another way to look at unresolved trauma is to suppose that at birth there is \$100 in your emotional bank account. If something painful or traumatic happens when you are an infant or toddler (0-18 months), maybe you leave \$20 at that stage. If in childhood something else happens, maybe you lose another \$15. In adolescence, maybe you lose another \$10. So, when the time comes for you to make the leap into young adulthood, you have only \$55 left in your account and the leap requires at least \$65. You just can't pull it off. You can kind of get up there, but you just don't stick. You don't have the necessary funds or energy to get to that next stage. You don't continue to grow because the necessary energy is stuck back there in the shadows with those darn dragons in the dungeon. Think of some of the problems such a situation might cause: failed relationships, failure at school or work, family problems, low self-esteem, depression, etc.

Happily, you live in a time when the healing is available to overcome and release these issues from the past. You can get free. Your therapist and field guides can help you do this. It's work, but a lot less scary and painful than you probably think. Get to work - a much better future awaits.

Share some of your dragons with your group. Now write down what that process was like. Was it hard or easy? What kind of feedback did you get from the group?

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### STEP SEVEN

**I have made a list of everyone and everything that I have harmed as a result of my unconscious and compulsive behaviors.**

As we begin to heal and start to have compassion for ourselves, we find that we start to have more compassion for others. Compassion comes from the Latin word “copassione” which means “to suffer with.” As we begin to be more aware of the sources of our suffering, we feel empathy for the suffering of others and especially those we have hurt through our behaviors. Maybe you used to think of people as objects to be used so that you could get what you want. Now you are thinking of people as people again, people that you have hurt. As you continue healing inside yourself, you will need to clean up outside yourself. In Step Seven, you will need to identify the messes you made. This Step is not about people and things that have hurt you, but people and things you have hurt.

Write a list of people and things you have hurt. Write down what you did to hurt them and be specific. Be honest and take risks here: remember that our shameful secrets become dragons.

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Share the results of your list with your group and share what the process was like. Remember that you are not alone and you are getting free.

## STEP EIGHT

**I have made restitution and reconciliation wherever it was possible and compassionate to do so.**

Having identified the messes that we have made and the people we have hurt, we must do our very best to clean up those messes. Sometimes a letter will suffice, or at least be a good start. If you think that your efforts to make things right will hurt the person more than help them at this time, then you must hold off, but make this decision in consultation with your therapist. This Step is about helping the person you harmed, not about hurting them more. A face-to-face meeting is the preferred method, but that is not generally possible for students at Open Sky. A letter is a good way to start making amends.

You might start your letter with: “Hi Bill, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I know this is awkward and may be painful, but I am in a treatment program because of my problems. As a part of getting well, I am trying to fix things with the people I hurt. First of all, let me say I am very sorry for \_\_\_\_\_. If it’s alright with you, I want to fix the problems I caused for you by...” Ask for a response to your letter and listen deeply to what is written back to you. Depending on how long your problems have lasted, this process of restitution and reconciliation might take a long time. Take it one day at a time and work with a support person. This is hard work, but again you are getting free.

Write at least two letters to people you have hurt. Your therapist can check off here when those letters are done:

Letter 1 Complete and Sent

Letter 2 Complete and Sent

## STEP NINE

**As a part of my awakening process I am examining my core beliefs, my values, and vision for my life.**

There is a well known verse from the Old Testament that says, “Without a vision, the people perish.” Without a sense of direction in our lives or a sense of what our gifts are, how can we participate in the world in a useful, meaningful way? Without direction, our recovery journey becomes rudderless and empty. If our lives have no meaning, the answer to the question, “why shouldn’t I get high or do any other thing that will give me short term pleasure?” becomes hard to answer in a positive way. In that kind of head space, the answer is more often “why not?” This is why it is essential for you to get a clear sense of who you are and what your gifts are. One way to start is

to answer the question: what do you love more than drugs or your other destructive behaviors?

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is recorded as saying: “If you keep that which is within you, it will destroy you, but if you bring it forth, it will give you life.” Another kind of dragon we have not mentioned yet is our wonderful gifts which we have kept stuffed inside, a dragon of light! If we keep these gifts inside us, they poison us, causing depression and despair. Finding these gifts is often like being a detective trying to crack a case. You have to look for the clues and begin to put a picture together. Often these clues are right in front of us, but other times they are more subtle.

Write a list of what really matters to you. What matters more than drugs or your other self-destructive behaviors?

What matters to me is....

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Now write a list of the things that make you really feel alive.

I feel most alive when....

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Now make a list of your gifts.

What I think I'm really good at is....

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What other people have told me that I'm really good at is....

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Share these lists with your group during a group session. Ask for honest feedback from your peers, guides and therapist. This is the process of discovering your vision. Your path is becoming clearer.

## STEP TEN

**I continue to examine myself with rigorous honesty and to consider how my ideas about myself limit or empower my life's progress.**

As we progress in our journey of therapeutic work and releasing dragons, we begin to see that the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves are just stories. And our stories are just that, fictions that we make up, and in many cases may not be true. These stories can cause a great deal of suffering. They can also keep us from growing to our greatest version of ourselves. In Step Ten, we identify our stories -- many of them are out of our awareness -- and here we become aware of them. One possible story is: "Dad was an alcoholic, and when I made him mad, he drank and got angry and violent. So it was my fault." This story can be changed to: "Yes, Dad was an alcoholic and his alcoholism and the way he expressed it really had nothing to do with me."

At Step Ten, you identify your stories and then you consider the feelings and beliefs that arise from these stories. You will need to consider what is not true about your stories. You will also work on reconstructing a story that more closely reflects your truth and healing. A new story might be: "Yes, Dad was an alcoholic, and that was very hurtful to me, but now I am learning how to confront and release that pain, and it doesn't have to hurt me anymore. It wasn't my fault."

To complete Step Ten, identify your stories (meditation and therapy can be very helpful in this regard), and then write them out below. This may be a bit challenging because our stories can be like the water a fish swims in: we are immersed in it but are not aware of it. Your therapist and guides can be helpful in making these unconscious stories conscious. And sometimes just making something conscious is a healing act in itself.

One story that I tell myself about my life is...

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Some feelings and beliefs that I have because of this story are...

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Here are some of the ways that this story has affected my life....

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A new story about this might be:

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Another story that I tell myself about my life is....

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Some feelings and beliefs that I have because of this story are...

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Here are some of the ways that this story has affected my life....

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A new story about this might be:

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Once you have written down a few stories above, share them with your therapist. Then write out your old stories on a separate piece of paper and, with the support of your group, place your old stories in the fire. Burning your stories can symbolize the release of your old stories and beliefs -- you can be a new you with new stories.

In your quiet moments, tell yourself your old stories in your mind then pay attention to the bodily sensations that arise. Bring your attention to the feelings in your body and let them intensify. Once they are very strong, breathe in deeply and say to yourself, "I completely accept these feelings" and on the out breath say "I totally release them." Continue this until you feel a little more relaxed. When you feel you are done with this step and with the approval of your field guides and therapist, you are ready for Step Eleven.

### **STEP ELEVEN**

**Continue to evaluate my personal wellness practices and make changes or adjustments as necessary.**

As you progress in your journey at Open Sky, it is good to evaluate your growth and what you have learned thus far.

What changes have you noticed in yourself since you started your personal wellness practices at Open Sky? Address body, mind, heart and soul practices.

Changes I have noticed in general:

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The ways that my body practices have affected me is....

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The ways that my mind practices have affected me is....

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The ways that my heart practices have affected me is....

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The ways that my soul practices have affected me is....

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Now answer the question: what is your motivation now to keep these practices up for the foreseeable future or for a lifetime? Rate your motivation on a scale of one to ten and explain.

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What changes in your practices do you need to make at this time?

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How can you keep up these personal wellness practices to maintain your health and continue the growth that you have experienced at Open Sky?

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Consult with your field guides as you work on this paper and present the results to your guides and therapist for comment and discussion. With the approval of your guides and therapist, you are ready to continue on to Step Twelve. Congratulations!

## STEP TWELVE

**As a result of this journey of awakening, I commit myself to a life of integrity and service.**

As we continue the journey of recovery, there arises within us a desire to serve others. As we grow healthier, we move from being self-focused to being family-focused to being service-focused. Often when we begin the journey of healing, our motivation is: "I'm simply sick and tired of being sick and tired." But as the journey continues, we practice not just to start feeling better, but to become more skilled at using our strengths. This requires that we "step up to the plate" and use our skills. If we have been self-indulgent couch potatoes, the likelihood of hitting one out of the park or even getting on base is very

doubtful. However, if we are highly trained and conditioned athletes, we will be in a condition to score. Being in shape to score is the spirit and meaning of our personal wellness practices. We practice each day taking care of ourselves and others so that we are in shape to handle all that life offers us.

It is helpful each day to bow our heads and dedicate our activities to something more than ourselves, to that greater cause or purpose to which we can dedicate our time. Spend some time in your quiet moments contemplating this and when you are ready, write a paper explaining what your higher purpose is at this time, realizing that the purpose will grow and deepen as we grow and deepen.

What is my higher purpose at this time? What is bigger than me that I believe in? What do I want to put energy towards at this time?

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Share the results with your staff team and then with your group.  
Congratulations, you have finished Step Twelve and the Integral Twelve Steps!